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Mazzei, Filippo

MAZZEI'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GRAND DUKE OF TUSCANY DURING HIS AMERICAN MISSION

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FIRST INSTALLMENT

The place of Philip Mazzei in American history is chiefly that of an envoy to Europe to obtain aid for Virginia, in the form of money and supplies, during our Revolution. Assistance from Europe was of vital importance if the Colonies were to achieve their independence. Because of his admirable qualifications for the mission—being a Tuscan by birth, a merchant of considerable experience, a judge of men and their motives, a writer—Mazzei received his appointment from Governor Patrick Henry and the Virginia Council, in January 1779. He was authorized to obtain a loan of gold and silver, not exceeding £900,000, and to purchase goods in Italy for the use of the troops. After signing the oath of allegiance to the commonwealth of Virginia on April 21, 1779, he sailed on June 19th from Hobb's Hole, on the Rapahannock, accompanied by his wife, his step-daughter, and a friend, Francesco del Maglio.

The story of Mazzei's mission as related in his own dispatches and other documents found in the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library, was published by the Library in 1935.¹ This volume contains Mazzei's dispatches to Thomas Jefferson, as Governor of Virginia, and to his successor, Benjamin Harrison; the relation of his captivity by the English; and the representation of his conduct, from the time of his appointment to be agent of the State in Europe until his return to Virginia. The whole gives a fairly complete account of the work Mazzei carried out in Europe on behalf of the State of Virginia.

There is another phase of the work Mazzei did in his native Tuscany, during his mission, that is not yet generally known in this country. In his *Memoirs*² Mazzei recalls that to carry out the general purpose of his mission, soon after his arrival in Florence in October 1780, he arranged to have an interview with the Grand Duke Leopold through his friend, Angiolo Tavanti, the Grand

¹ Mazzei, Philip. *Philip Mazzei, Virginia's Agent in Europe. The Story of his Mission as Related in His own Dispatches and other Documents.* Edited by Howard R. Marraro. New York, The New York Public Library. 1935, 106 pp.

² Mazzei, Philip. *Memoirs of the Life and Peregrinations of the Florentine Philip Mazzei 1730-1816.* Translated by Howard R. Marraro. New York, Columbia University Press. 1942, 254ff.

Duke's Minister of Finance, from whom Mazzei received a few helpful suggestions as to how he should conduct himself with the Prince in order to assure the complete success of the task that lay before him.

At the first interview, scarcely had Mazzei entered the room and bowed, when the Prince greeted him in a loud voice: "There is no doubt that you have predicted everything that has come to pass." The Grand Duke was referring to the predictions Mazzei had made in the letters he had sent him from America on the events that preceded and immediately followed the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. It was agreed at this first interview that in order not to arouse the suspicions of Sir Horace Mann, the English Minister in Florence, as to the real object of Mazzei's visit to Tuscany, he (Mazzei) was to write whatever he wished to communicate to the Grand Duke, and that if ever he wished to speak with the Prince, he should present himself as an ordinary subject on the days of the Prince's audience. In that case, however, Mazzei was to give His Royal Highness advance notice of his visit so that the Prince could order to have him admitted immediately after the departure of the person who happened to be with him on his arrival.

Mazzei wrote the Grand Duke a series of eleven letters. In all of them he tried to explain the causes and ideals of the Revolution and the advantages that Tuscany might derive if the Grand Duke only manifested his favorable disposition toward the Colonies by aiding them to achieve their independence. Mazzei's letters to the Grand Duke were published in Italian as an appendix to his *Memorie*³ which were printed in 1845-46, but the letters have never before appeared in English. The letters follow:

[No. 1]

Florence, May 1781.

Your Royal Highness will permit me in this memorandum which I write in the form of a letter to call your attention, with all due respect and deference, to certain matters which I hope will meet with your approval and which, I feel my duty to communicate to you alone and to no one else, as a prudent and necessary policy requires.

However, before I do so, I must go back a little to review past incidents, which at first sight may appear irrelevant to the subject matter of this memorandum, but which in reality will

³ Mazzei, Philip. *Memorie della Vita e delle Peregrinazioni del Fiorentino Filippo Mazzei*. Lugano, Tipografia della Svizzera Italiana. 1845-46. 2 volumes. The letters to the Grand Duke are in the second volume, pp. 195-277.

provide a background that will help Your Royal Highness to understand the natural development of certain events. Without this background the events may appear improbable.

Before my departure for America, I had the honor to tell you, my beloved Prince, that I hoped to establish relations with Virginia which would prove advantageous to the states of Your Royal Highness. Therefore, on my arrival there, I considered it my duty to present, in the best possible light, the permission you granted me to export not only several plants whose cultivation was very much desired over there, but also the necessary trained farm help.

I do not recall whether, before my departure, I took the liberty of communicating to Your Royal Highness certain remarks contained in a letter which I had received in Florence from Mr. Thomas Adams⁴ of Virginia of which the following is a literal translation: "I advise and urge you not to lose any time in coming here; everyone knows you here and awaits you with open arms, ready to support the praiseworthy enterprise you have undertaken." I had made the acquaintance of this worthy friend in London, and during the fourteen months he lived there, we were almost always together. He is one of the best of men, gifted with common sense, well educated and cultured, although not profoundly versed in the sciences. He is greatly admired and respected. In that country qualities of good character are most highly valued, whereas those of the mind come second, and all other considerations yield before these. I do not mean to imply that there are no exceptions in the country as a whole, but they are not many. Furthermore, these exceptions cannot do much harm since public opinion holds them in check.

Prior to my arrival there, Mr. Adams had obtained for me five thousand acres of land in places which I had described to him as being suitable for the cultivation of the plants I was going to introduce. He had publicised my name to such an extent that on a trip of eight hundred miles which I then made through Virginia, I found no one who, upon hearing it, did not say that I was already known to him. This can easily happen in that country, for the two representatives of each county to the general state assembly fully satisfy the curiosity of their constituents on returning home, so that, even in the remotest sections, if anything of any importance occurs, it is soon known. From what I have said, it may be seen that my words commanded some consideration. In fact, Your Royal Highness' name was eagerly and widely mentioned with every sign of respect and gratitude. It must be remembered that the people were not unaware of the laws which,

⁴ See *Virginia Magazine*, new series, VI, 23, note.

in various countries of Europe, prohibit the exportation of the plants Your Royal Highness so graciously granted me permission to export.

But what gave further support to my remarks was the fact that I found there Lord Dunmore,⁵ the Governor, and General Lee,⁶ the traveller. Both men spoke of Your Royal Highness in such a way that their remarks could not but add support to my own statements. Your Royal Highness knows that General Lee, despite his eccentric and extravagant character, is a man of great ability, who has seen and read much, and is an effective speaker. Lord Dunmore does not possess these qualities, but he is considered a man of good birth, and was much respected until he was obliged by the English Government to act in such a way as to render himself detestable. Lord Dunmore spoke often of Vienna, and the cordial reception accorded him at that court; he regretted not having remained in the service of the House of Austria, as he had intended. In describing the excellent qualities of the entire imperial family, he expressed himself most warmly when he spoke of Your Royal Highness. I could quote many of his remarks in support of this statement, but I hope I am sufficiently well known by Your Royal Highness not to be suspected of partiality, or of exaggeration, especially as the person in question has become my bitter enemy, having been obliged to flee from Virginia.

General Lee drew a good picture of your virtues, among which he justly high-lighted the amiable kindness of your heart. He very aptly illustrated the wisdom of your laws and your untiring concern for the welfare of your subjects. Although his defects were pretty well known, he was esteemed for his ability; he travelled constantly and widely, and everywhere he talked overmuch, thus indulging his own inclination and meeting that of the Virginians, who generally prefer to listen rather than to talk. At public dinners we toasted the health of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, to the great delight of all those present.

I have deemed it advisable to tell you these things, my beloved Prince, in order that you may the more readily believe I do not exaggerate when I say that I cannot adequately express the extent to which you are esteemed and beloved in that country. Soon these sentiments began to spread throughout the United

⁵ Dunmore, John Murray. Earl of Dunmore (1732-1809). Appointed governor of New York in 1770, and of Virginia in July 1771. With the outbreak of hostilities he fled from Virginia to New York, but later returned with a small band to ravage the Virginia coast, burning Norfolk. He returned to England where he continued to show himself a bitter opponent of the Colonies. (R. C. Garlick, *Philip Mazzei, Friend of Jefferson*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933, 45.)

⁶ Lee, Richard Henry. Signer of the Declaration. See Ballagh, *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*.

States, for reasons which I shall explain in due time. Virginians believe that Your Royal Highness is favorably disposed toward them; indeed, it is taken for granted that the feeling is mutual. I may have been responsible for their assuming that this feeling is reciprocal; there is no doubt that I have sought to give it grounds, especially since the Revolution, for I foresaw the good results which must ensue once peace is restored. From the very beginning I advised some of my friends to send their children to Pisa for their education, and before my departure I was assured that as soon as navigation again becomes safe, the children of nearly all the prominent families in Virginia will be sent here. The advantages that would accrue to the industry and the general commerce of Tuscany from this fact would be immense. The reasons are too long to enumerate here, but they are obvious and certain.

In the month of March 1775, the rumor gained credence in Virginia that the English Government intended to send several commissioners to negotiate a settlement to the satisfaction of the Colonies. However, several persons, including myself, held an opposite view. As I informed Your Royal Highness, it was my belief that this was a political trick of the English cabinet to pull the wool over our eyes. I did all I could to keep the minds of the colonists on the alert. A few days later, in convening the Assembly for the month of May, Lord Dunmore stated that he had received orders to submit certain propositions which would prove satisfactory to everyone. In the meantime, I received two communications from London, one from Count Brühl,⁷ the Envoy of Saxony, and the other from Mr. Anthony Chamier,⁸ who was officially second in command at the War Department, but in reality in full command, since he was in charge of all matters. From these letters it seemed clear that there was no hope for any settlement. When the meeting of the popularly elected representatives was over, I communicated the contents of these letters to Mr. Thomas Jefferson, my intimate friend and neighbor, at present the Governor of Virginia, who was then preparing to go to Congress. We agreed on the proposals we thought proper to submit. I wrote also to Dr. Franklin, likewise a member of Congress, who shared our views. But in Congress there was still a large number of men who hoped for a settlement—a circumstance which caused harmful delay in the preparations that had to be made for our defence. In fact, these persons desired to send a second petition couched

⁷ Brühl, Heinrich. Count (1700-63). Minister of August III, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony.

⁸ Before his departure for America, Mazzei had been advised by his friend, Anthony Chamier, not to leave England "where you have so great a number of excellent friends" to go "in a country, where, if you break a chair, you will find nobody to mend it for you." (Garlick, *op. cit.*, 29).

in such terms that Jefferson, in sending me a copy of it, wrote: "Our cowardice will surprise you, but it was necessary to agree to it in order to avoid a division among us. Our only comfort lies in having sent it in good company." The "company" was the declaration of our intention to defend ourselves, if we did not obtain justice. At the time of this declaration, which I had the honor of forwarding immediately to Your Royal Highness, with my comments, Dr. Franklin, in a letter to me concerning the propositions brought to Congress by Mr. Jefferson, made the following statement:⁹

"The members of Congress have not yet signified their views concerning the formation of alliances or the importation of what is needed from distant countries. They are very much obliged to you, however, for your offer, and for the information you have imparted, which within a year or two may, in my opinion, be very useful to them. I thank you personally from the bottom of my heart for the translation of our declaration which you sent to the Grand Duke, for, having formed the highest opinion of that Prince and all his imperial family through the information received from you and my good friend, Dr. Ingenhousz,¹⁰ I should like to have that Court favorably disposed toward us."

In the war which is at present being fought by the thirteen United States, Virginia contributes one-sixth of the men, money, and of everything else that is needed. Virginia is the oldest state, the largest, the richest, and the most abounding in great men. Her population and products are increasing and will continue to increase much more rapidly than those of the other states. I learned from the famous John Adams, of Massachusetts, who is now in Holland,¹¹ that in Congress the representatives of other states have always had great respect for the vote of the representatives of Virginia. It is, therefore, not surprising that through these Virginian representatives, especially through Mr. Jefferson, who is acknowledged one of the most worthy and learned men in America, and through Dr. Franklin, Your Royal Highness soon became known, beloved, and esteemed everywhere in the States.

⁹ See letter of Franklin to Mazzei, Philadelphia, December 27, 1775. In: *Memoirs*, 218.

¹⁰ Ingenhousz, Jan. (1730-99). Born in Breda. Physician, physicist and naturalist. Died in Bowood (London).

¹¹ Adams, John. Disappointed because he was not publicly recognized in Paris as American Commissioner, Adams left Paris to go to Amsterdam where he was eminently successful in securing there the recognition of the U. S. as an independent government (April 19, 1782), and negotiating both a loan and a treaty of Commerce.

Some of the ablest and most zealous citizens of Virginia eagerly manifested their desire that I be sent to Europe by Congress, confident as they were and still are, of Your Royal Highness' predisposition in their favor, and believing that I could be useful to the American cause here and elsewhere. As I had the honor of telling Your Royal Highness in my first interview, Mr. Richard Lee, who was then the head of the Virginian delegation, used some of the information that had been communicated to him in a letter to further his own ends, withholding its essential parts. This fact was responsible for the imprudence of appointing Mr. Izard¹² to public office. Lee was also so brazenly indiscreet as to fail to deliver to Mr. John Adams a letter enclosed for him by Mr. Jefferson, because from the letter Jefferson wrote to Lee, he understood it was along the same lines. I also told Your Royal Highness that the intrigues of the Lee brothers were discovered and that they were discharged from their offices, both in Europe and in America.

Since Congress did not deem it proper to send secret agents to Europe, the State of Virginia determined to send me to look after its own interests. When I was about to leave in the month of June 1779, my aforementioned friend, Mr. Thomas Adams, on his return from Congress, told me that within two or three weeks I would be sought by Congress and, since he was among the most active advocates of the duties that were to be entrusted to me, he was much displeased by what had taken place. The ship being ready to sail, I left immediately. Through the captain's treachery, I was taken prisoner¹³ and, as I had the honor to tell Your Royal Highness, in reciting my long series of adventures up to the time of my arrival in Italy, I threw my credentials and instructions into the sea.

I had been in Italy for some time, when I realized that I could not execute, according to my instructions, some of the commissions entrusted to me, especially the most important one. It was

¹² Izard, Ralph (1741-1804). Revolutionary patriot, diplomat, senator. While in Paris he was elected by Congress, May 7, 1777, commissioner to Tuscany, but he was never received by that government and so remained in France. While in Paris, he opened negotiations with Tuscany, aided Alexander Gillon in securing funds for ships of war, and cooperated with Lee in his efforts toward obtaining the French treaty. The delay in Paris and the controversies with Franklin led to Izard's recall in 1779, before his resignation had been received, but after his dispatches explaining his position reached Congress, a resolution was passed approving his conduct (Aug. 9, 1780). In 1782 he was chosen a delegate from South Carolina to Congress, serving until peace was declared. On the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1789, he was chosen U. S. Senator. [*Dictionary of American Biography*, IX, 524-25.]

¹³ For Mazzei's relation of his captivity see: *Philip Mazzei: Virginia's Agent in Europe*. 65-84.

necessary, therefore, to write for new credentials and instructions. But since the government exercises only the executive power and must, before making any changes, be so authorized by the legislative assembly, the papers may be long in coming, especially in view of the fact that over and above the usual obstacles, Virginia has now become the theater of war.

However, the fact that I am without my credentials is at present advantageous, for should Your Royal Highness deem it your duty, in spite of all the precautions that could be used, not to accede to my requests, your unwillingness could not be held against you, and circumstances might change before the necessity of an explanation would arise.

Mr. John Adams, the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at The Hague, in whom all America has confidence, having recently written me from Amsterdam on matters concerning Congress, I replied that although I had not as yet received the new credentials, it did not seem wise to me to undertake to serve Congress without the consent of the Government of Virginia. My chief aim in making this suggestion to Mr. Adams was to gain time.

I do not deem it wise to tire Your Royal Highness further at this time by discussing matters which cannot be carried out at present, but, with your permission, I shall discuss them after my return from Leghorn and Pisa, within two or three weeks. Meanwhile, in begging your graciousness to read attentively the two enclosed papers, I am carrying out some of the duties entrusted to me, namely, first to try to show you the justice of the American cause, and second, the probability of a successful issue.¹⁴

In another paper, if you will be so kind as to accept it, I shall show the importance of securing the commerce of Virginia, which would be very active;¹⁵ indeed Tuscany has not enough workers to supply its demands. Meanwhile, with the aid of merchants and manufacturers, I am endeavoring to find out what are the manufactures of Tuscany. At the same time, I am suggesting the articles that should be manufactured. Thus I am endeavoring to prepare the ground so that I will lose no time in carrying out my instructions as soon as circumstances permit.

Since it would please Americans to know that they are highly regarded, and since the opinion of no other person

¹⁴ The titles of these papers are: *La Giustizia della Causa Americana*; and *Riflessioni Tendenti a Prognosticar l'Evento della Presente guerra* (*La probabilità d'un felice evento.*)

¹⁵ This paper is entitled: *L'Importanza di Procurarsi il Commercio colla Virginia.*

means as much to them as that entertained by you and your august brother, I would regard it among the most gracious favors granted or to be granted by your supreme kindness, were you to have the Emperor read my paper entitled *Ragioni per cui non può darsi agli Stati Americani la Taccia di Ribelli*. [*Reasons why Americans cannot be stigmatized as Rebels*].

My beloved prince, I shall not apologize further for the frankness of my language, nor for the simplicity of my style, for I have reason to believe that you prefer to know the naked truth, without either frills or tinsle. My respect for your person, and for your sterling and singular virtues, cannot be greater; but it dwells in my heart and, if the occasion arose, it would show in my deeds, and not in high-sounding words or phrases.

Permit me, meanwhile, to declare myself once more your most humble and most devoted servant, etc.

[No. 2]

Florence, August 1781

Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, Filippo Mazzei, having recently received some papers from America, thought that he should again avail himself of the liberty so graciously granted him and, while begging Your Royal Highness to glance over the enclosed paper with your usual indulgence, he sends you the French translation of another article written by Dr. Franklin on a subject similar to that dealt with in the enclosure.¹⁶

The writer will present himself at the public audience to ask either the grace of being allowed to speak, or the permission to write on the subjects sufficiently at length to explain himself fully. He hopes Your Royal Highness will do him justice, not only by having entire faith in him in matters of fact, but also as regards his great accuracy in distinguishing (in so far as human limitations permit) the various degrees of probability in matters which are not absolutely certain.

America's independence may be considered as stable as any other thing that is not subject to change, except under truly extraordinary circumstances. Her resources are immense, and those of Virginia infinitely greater than those of any other state. The direct commerce which Tuscany has had with England until now has been unfavorable; the commerce which it may have with America should be entirely favorable.

¹⁶ It has been impossible to find the nature of the enclosures referred to. In his *Memoirs* Mazzei states that he could not find either of these articles.

The writer accepted his commission with great pleasure for several reasons, the most important of which was the hope of being able to contribute his share in supplying the means whereby the effects of the good and wise regulations which Your Royal Highness has made and continues to make for the prosperity of your states can be quickly and efficaciously felt.¹⁷ Relations might be established with the United States, if you wish, but for the present the writer would, for various reasons, advise doing so with Virginia alone. His desire for the common good, and the certainty he feels of earning increasingly for himself through this means the valuable and earnestly desired esteem of Your Royal Highness, together with the gratification of performing a meritorious service to two countries equally dear to him, force the writer to beg Your Royal Highness most ardently to look upon the opportunity of binding with indissoluble ties the esteem and friendship of a people with the highest sense of gratitude as something of no small importance.

The simplicity of his style, and his eagerness to dwell even on minute details in an effort to throw full light on the subject, will make Your Royal Highness see that the writer, far from seeking to persuade through the art of flattering eloquence, has no other desire than to present matters as they are in order that Your Royal Highness may be able to judge them as if you had them before you.

Before leaving Virginia, your servant declared that he would never propose anything which he did not consider mutually satisfactory, that he would deal frankly with Your Royal Highness in every way, that he would not conceal from you, under any circumstances, the least detail of any matter, and that he hoped (even if his proposals were not agreeable) that your natural and exceptional kindness would have induced you not only to keep these matters to yourself, but also to favor the writer with your wise counsel. Both the Governor and the Councillors of State then in power, who had (as have the present Councillors, and the majority of the inhabitants) the greatest esteem for Your Royal Highness, entirely agreed with the writer.

¹⁷ Peter Leopold, who, in 1765, succeeded his father, Francis Stephen, in the Grand Duchy, gave great impulse to reforms by appointing eminent and conservative Tuscans as his counsellors: Giulio Rucellai, Pompeo Neri, Francesco Gianni, and Bishop Scipione de' Ricci. Leopold's economic reforms proved very satisfactory, but his social reforms affecting the relationship between Church and State were not good, since he not only sought to stop all interference on the part of the Church in State matters, but wanted also the State to intervene in the internal affairs of the Church. (Rodolico, *Sommario Storico*, II, 349, 350)

P. S. In the belief that it will not displease Your Royal Highness to learn how things are faring in America, the writer has the honor to inform you that, having notified the Government of Virginia in various letters, that the English keep up the same refrain, and that they were succeeding in making all Europe believe that the majority of the inhabitants of Virginia desire and hope to unite themselves with England, the Governor replied: "Nothing could be farther from the truth; the zeal of the people for the American cause, and their disgust and hatred for Great Britain are as stable as rocks; and any desire to make a separate peace with England would be so vile, that I am certain no one in America would dare to express it."

The Governor's character is such that he would not wish for any reason to be guilty of the slightest exaggeration.¹⁸

Your Royal Highness may remember that early in 1775, the writer had the honor to call your attention to the surprising falsehoods contained in English reports. If he but had a chance to tell you of the things he heard and saw himself in New York along the line of exaggerations and fabrications, Your Royal Highness would be persuaded that everything that comes from that quarter must be regarded with suspicion.

[No. 3]

Florence, August 1781

The greatest misfortune of the American States in this war is the difficulty of shipping their surplus products to Europe in order to receive in exchange those things they themselves need. Virginia, covering a vast area of the very best land, has met and will continue to meet (for some centuries perhaps) great obstacles to manufacture goods, because, the inhabitants being so widely scattered and deriving great profit from concentrating on the production of raw materials, wages and other expenses would be so high that the goods would cost much more than if they came from Europe, in spite of shipping costs, commissions, and dealers' profits. To supply its own quota of the various commodities necessary for the support of the army, the State of Virginia has deemed it wise to borrow money in Europe, and has entrusted the writer with this and other commissions. The Virginians, convinced as they are that they enjoy Your Royal Highness' good will, and knowing the strength of the prosperous state of the treasury of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany,

¹⁸ At that time, the governor was my well-known friend, Mr. Thomas Jefferson. [Mazzei's own note].

have instructed the writer to try to obtain this loan from Your Royal Highness, by demonstrating to you the reasons for which you could safely make the loan, and the advantageous consequences which your state would inevitably derive therefrom. If he does not obtain it, his instructions authorize him to make a second attempt in Genoa, before going elsewhere.

On his arrival in Paris, he made the acquaintance of Signor Favi,¹⁹ with whom he often discussed Tuscan affairs. From Signor Favi the writer learned of the excellent use Your Royal Highness has made of your surplus funds. Realizing, therefore, the impossibility of obtaining the entire sum from Your Royal Highness, he stopped two months in Genoa, on his way to Tuscany, with the intention of predisposing the minds of the Genoese to accept his own views should the occasion arise. This he was able to do without arousing any suspicion concerning his mission, for natural curiosity prompted people to seek him out and question him on just those matters concerning which he desired to substitute true and clear ideas for inaccurate and false ones. Signor Paolo Celesia,²⁰ the writer's old and intimate friend, was of inestimable help, chiefly by informing him of the character of the people with whom he had to deal. Signor Celesia is greatly respected for his exceptional talents, for which reason his opinion is generally sought and, though the nobility of his family begins only with his father, he has been made a member of the Privy Council, his great worth having overcome the prejudices of the most refined and haughty aristocrats. He is one of those very rare beings whose judgment, prudence, honesty, and friendship may be entirely relied upon. From him, then, the writer, having confided everything to him, received information which, should the need arise, may prove very useful. To give the writer some idea of the credit standing Your Royal Highness enjoys, Signor Celesia made use of the following illustration: "If, while so many other nations seek money at a high rate of interest, the Grand Duke should want it at four per cent, he would collect every single penny in Genoa." He said that in this transaction the sanction of the Grand Duke would carry great weight and, if publicity was not wanted, it would be sufficient to have a Tuscan bank-

¹⁹ The Tuscan agent in Paris.

²⁰ Celesia, Pietro Paolo (1731-1806). Prominent Genoese of the XVIII century. Member of several European academies. Twice ambassador in London. Nephew of the abbot Niccoli in the Tuscan agency in Paris. Mazzei spent three weeks with Mr. Celesia in Genoa, discussing his mission on behalf of Virginia.

ing house float a loan, and to have it known in Genoa that the writer enjoys the good will of Your Royal Highness.

All these facts led the writer to hope that, if the transaction succeeded, he might be able to see to it that Your Royal Highness would receive credit also for all the sums obtained outside of Tuscany. Circumstances, combined with the lack of his credentials, forced the writer to remain inactive up to the time he presented the first memorandum along with other papers. Since that time he has received several envelopes from America containing the duplicates of the first commission and instructions, as well as a number of letters from the Governor of Virginia, from one of which he takes the liberty of copying the following excerpt, and of adding the translation.

“It was found, after your departure, that it would be much better not to send Mr. Smith²¹ to Europe at all, and to entrust you with the execution of his commission, as you will see from the instructions. In some conversations I had with you I think I mentioned that if we obtain the loan according to our own desires, it would be better, in my private opinion, to stipulate that interest should not begin until the money was asked for. I am still of the same opinion, and I am authorized to advise you to so stipulate, since it is not advisable for us to bring over any part of the loan from Europe in money.”

Patrick Henry was Governor at the time of these conversations. Mr. Jefferson, who has succeeded him, now speaks with the consent of the State Council. Mr. Smith was to go to Holland to attend to certain matters in which he is especially competent. Since what the writer had to obtain was small by comparison, he stated that in his own opinion it would be better policy from every point of view to give preference to that country from which the loan was expected, and to secure elsewhere only the things which could not be had from that country. The suggestion was later accepted, as has been noted, and it is thought that in this undertaking the writer can, with the aid of friends, supplement the knowledge he lacks. If the plan succeeds, there is the probability of sending the great part of the sum in this country's manufactured articles, and perhaps even the entire sum, if the country is able and willing to manufacture what is needed.

As may be inferred from the paragraph quoted from the letter wherein the interest is mentioned, they thought it possible to secure the loan. If it is to be secured by subscription, it is necessary to

²¹ It has been impossible to identify this Mr. Smith.

have the money begin to draw interest from the day each sum is subscribed; certain other expenses are also necessary which the writer has not the authority to incur. The executive power cannot confer such authority without first obtaining it from the legislature. The writer is restricted to pay not over five per cent interest annually, and is to stipulate that, provided interest payments are made annually, the repayment of the capital must be at the rate of not more than 200,000 pounds sterling per year, to begin not before five years after the termination of the war.

As Your Royal Highness may have noted from his first memorandum, the writer asked for new credentials. In accordance with the permission he received during his second audience, the writer declared his willingness to agree to everything that could be done prudently. He has repeatedly written that he did not deem it proper to discuss his commission in detail until he had received the duplicates of his original credentials, so as to show that he has the power to enter into negotiations.

Trusting in Your Royal Highness' incomparable kindness, the writer had just resolved to see Your Royal Highness again in order to give you some reasons why he considered it advisable to return immediately to America, with the hope of coming back soon in more peaceful times and with more definite instructions. He had even dared to hope he might ask your opinion on the question. But the arrival of recent letters containing the duplicates of the original commissions which, for reasons still unknown, have been so long delayed in transit, renders all this no longer possible.²²

As soon as the new credentials are received, which will probably require some time, as he stated in his first report, the writer's first letters will have to indicate the probability or improbability of obtaining the loan. The time of concluding negotiations seems, therefore, to be far off, but it is now necessary to state the outlook with more certainty and precision.

The instructions, which the writer seeks permission to submit to Your Royal Highness along with his credentials, after mentioning the name of the Grand Duke, make the following suggestion: "He cannot be expected to lend us money from his coffers either directly or openly, while the danger of displeasing Great Britain remains so evident, but, should he be willing to favor us, various secret and indirect means can be found." The

²² In a dispatch to Jefferson, dated Florence, March 8, 1782, Mazzei hints that Franklin delayed his credentials so as to make it impossible for him to exercise his powers. This is plausible since it is known that Franklin disapproved of Mazzei's mission. (Garlick, *op. cit.*, 74)

writer is also instructed to inform Your Royal Highness of the great resources of the country and of other things with which he does not think he should tire you longer, at least for the present.

[No. 4]

Florence, April 18, 1782.

Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, Filippo Mazzei, availing himself of the permission granted him to communicate to you in writing what to him may seem opportune, has deemed it proper not to delay any longer in troubling Your Royal Highness with some of his ideas on the very interesting crisis in British affairs, which to him seem imminent. The substantiation of everything he has had the honor of telling and writing to Your Royal Highness since the summer of 1773, before his departure for America, flatters him into thinking that he must be heeded as one whose conjectures are founded on fact, and not as a rash prophet whose imagination is inflamed by wishful thinking.

The writer believes firmly that the desire for peace is general in England, and is shared by the King and his ministers, despite all apparent controversies on the subject, and that some of the principal members of the cabinet have already agreed to recognize the independence of America, without which they know peace cannot be secured. In the article he wrote last year entitled *Riflessioni tendenti a prognosticar l'Evento della Presente Guerra*, [Reflections Tending to Prophesy the Outcome of the Present War], the writer said that the ministers had no other means of extricating themselves from the dangerous undertaking in which they had by that time become so involved, than to bring about a situation in which the nation would cry out for peace, thereby placing themselves in a position to state that they were not the persons who were advocating the concessions necessary to obtain it. In his opinion, this is what they have already done; and it seems to him that the minister's trickery has been so marvelously planned and executed as to enable them to say that they were forced to adopt a decision which is essentially their own. He infers this from occurrences that lead to an almost mathematical proof. He flatters himself in believing that Your Royal Highness would agree with him were he to have the opportunity and the honor of being able to make a complete exposition of them. However, he will mention a few to show at least in part the bases of his conjectures.

The withdrawal of Lord Germain,²³ who was more opposed

²³ Sackville, George (1716-85). First Viscount. Generally remembered as Lord George Sackville or Lord George Germain. In 1775, he had been appointed secretary of state for the colonies in the North Cabinet.

to American independence than all the other ministers put together, was the first indication. The second, still stronger, was the appointment of General Carleton²⁴ to the supreme command of the armies in America. He is a man of noble and generous sentiments, peerless in his profession, and bitterly opposed to the war against the Americans. Convinced of the absurdity of a war of conquest in that country, Carleton could not have wished to jeopardize foolishly his established reputation; his heart could not have permitted him to do it, and much less to do it as the ministers would have liked to have it done up to now. He would never have consented to have an Arnold, that is, a traitor, as his second in command. However, the writer, knowing with what respect and esteem Carleton is regarded by the Americans, felt at once that he had accepted the command on the condition of a tacit understanding that all he would have to do was to try and improve the feelings of the Americans toward the English, and thus induce them gradually to enter upon peaceful, if not friendly, intercourse with his garrisons, instead of devising ways of taking them prisoners.

The writer has noted that, among the persons who have voted against the ministry, there are some who are as staunch supporters of the Court Party as were the Jesuits of their general. Since the ministers, after being defeated by a plurality vote on the subject of the war with America, have consistently received a favorable plurality on all questions tending to force them out of office, he is persuaded that among the members of Parliament there are some who in certain cases vote against the ministers to support their views. Those who believe that the ministry has lost the majority in Parliament surely do not get to the root of the question. It is impossible that this should be so, yet the ministry, seeing that the storm gathers to the point of proving fatal to it, may have lost the majority in order to remove itself from the danger. The writer believes that, until the withdrawal of Lord Germain, there was an understanding between the leaders of the two parties. He also sees clearly the subtle evasiveness with which things are conducted in order to conceal their significance, but he does not understand how the whole affair can end otherwise than by the impeachment of one of the ministers most hated by the nation. The nation has always decried the general conduct of its ministers, and especially has it condemned the alleged misuse of public funds. In the event of its accession to power, the opposition party which, because of the corruption whereby the government party has always managed to muster a majority, has not been able to

²⁴ Carleton, Guy (1724-1808). First Lord of Dorchester. British general and colonial governor. In 1782, he became commander-in-chief of the British Army in North America. It was during his command that peace was finally concluded.

force any minister to give an account of himself, cannot fail to have Parliament examine the conduct of the present ministers in very critical times, and especially the outlay of almost 103,000,000 pounds sterling, spent for the war since 1775. The writer thinks that this sum is too high and that a satisfactory account of its expenditures cannot be given. Furthermore, it must be remembered that a large part of it has passed through the hands of Lord Sandwich,²⁵ whose character, it is generally agreed, has never been very scrupulous. The present King said in 1764, that is, before appointing him as one of his ministers, that he would rather see his sceptre and his crown in pieces than take such a man into his service. Your Royal Highness probably knows that, although the King of England possesses full executive power, he has never, since the reign of Charles II, been responsible for the wrong conduct of affairs. On account of the tragedy which befell his father,²⁶ Charles II had Parliament pass an act which transferred all responsibility to the ministers, who are required to resign their posts rather than obey whenever they think that their obedience may be harmful to the country.

The evils are by now too grave and too well known. The currency has decreased to such a point that the validity of bank notes is beginning to be questioned. In a country whose wealth is principally derived from its active commerce, the chief item of which is manufactured woollens, raw wool has no market, and has fallen to a very low price. Meanwhile the cost of living has been increasing. The number of untenanted houses in London is very large, even in the vicinity of the Exchange where formerly there was not a vacant house to be seen. It is certain that the consumption of flour in that city has decreased by 4,000 sacks a week. But what has caused the greatest resentment against the administration has been the disclosure of the impossibility to pay the entire interest on the debt. Circumstances did not permit the minister to conceal the fact that the return on the taxes levied solely to pay the interest on the money borrowed in the years '78, '79, '80, was short by more than half a million, and that last year he had been compelled to make up this deficiency by borrowing an equal amount to be repaid from money to be borrowed for the current year's budget.

²⁵ Sandwich, John Montague (1718-92). Fourth Earl of. First lord of the admiralty from 1771 to 1782. For corruption and incapacity Sandwich's administration is unique in the history of the British navy.

²⁶ Charles I (1600-49). From the very beginning of his reign, Charles I was at war with Parliament without which he ruled from 1629-40. In 1644, he was defeated by Parliament, and trusted himself to the care of the Scotch, who in 1647, sold him to Parliament, which had him decapitated on January 30, 1649.

The impossibility of reviving industry, unless trade relations with America are resumed, is no longer a secret. For this reason the writer cannot have the least doubt but that the English will try every possible means to recapture as much trade as they can, before the other nations begin to enter into commercial relations with the colonies. He bases his beliefs on what he has already described and on much more data which he has omitted so as not to trouble Your Royal Highness too much, especially since his handwriting is so bad. Despite their apparent division, the Dutch seem to be on the verge of coming to an agreement concerning the signing of a commercial treaty with America, because they perceive its great advantage perhaps more fully than do other powers.²⁷ Having already stated in previous reports that the trade which this country could carry on with America would be entirely active, the writer need only add that every branch of industry would share in it, in accordance with what he thinks he has clearly demonstrated.

The writer's chief reason for troubling Your Royal Highness with this letter is the hope that, in view of the turn affairs are taking, Your Royal Highness will make it possible for him, since he has already communicated to that country the general assurance of Your Royal Highness' disposition to help it, to communicate to his superiors, without further delay, something definite, the consequence of which, he knows, cannot but be the very best.

Last autumn Your Royal Highness deigned to tell him that matters could not remain undecided for long, and that you did not see how this spring could pass without the issue becoming clear. Since this prophecy has been fully borne out, the writer hopes that he may be permitted to discuss the situation either with Your Royal Highness or with some person in your confidence, and to suggest what he considers advisable under the present circumstances, convinced as he is that the little that can be done now would be more profitable than the great deal more that can be done in the future.

At first the writer had thought of setting all these matters down on paper. He had already begun to do so, but on second thought he realized that to discuss the situation thoroughly, he would have to recite all the facts and forestall objections—a process which would prove too boresome to Your Royal Highness. Furthermore, the writer's clumsiness in copying, a fact which has caused him to copy the present report several times from the beginning, would have necessitated considerable delay. He decided, therefore, to omit the greater part of it, adding the last three

²⁷ A treaty of amity and commerce between Holland and the United States was signed in October 1782. After a similar treaty with France in February 1778, the one between Holland and the United States was the first of such treaties between the United States and foreign powers.

paragraphs to those he had written before the arrival of the information concerning the change in the English ministry. This explains why the report in several places seems to state as probable that which has already taken place.

The writer will present himself at the public audience next week. Meanwhile, he begs Your Royal Highness to attribute his solicitude to the certainty he feels of obtaining your approval, and to the well founded hope of deserving, by this means, that kindness which Your Royal Highness has, through the great goodness of your heart, hitherto shown him.

[No. 5]

Florence, April 29, 1782.

Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, Filippo Mazzei, has the honor, as a result of the permission received the other day, to forward to Your Royal Highness the translation of the act passed by the English Parliament concerning the question of peace or a truce with the Americans. He has taken the liberty of adding to the translation a few observations of his own.

It is not yet known whether this act has undergone final revision, which may, however, consist only in minor changes in the phraseology, in the event that it should be thought necessary for greater clarity; but the substance will not be changed, because they have already agreed on that point.

The act cannot show more clearly that the American states are recognized a separate and distinct power. Ample proof of this is to be found in the omission of the pronoun indicating *possession*, which is never omitted when any part of the British Empire is mentioned either by or to the King. It is unlikely that England will solemnly and literally declare America's independence, nor is there any need for her to humiliate herself in this manner; for our purpose it is sufficient that the fact is proven by her treating Americans as an independent people.

It is certain that the English have not the least hope, nor are they thinking of dealing with the Americans in any other way. But it would not be at all surprising were England to try, through her ministers at other courts, where American commerce might be considered advantageous to their states, to insinuate the contrary. This would be in line with her subtle duplicity, which has been practised from the inception of the war until now. This policy would have a two-fold purpose: first, to act ahead of the other nations; and second, to have Americans believe that no other nation, with the exception of France and Holland, would dare even to listen to them without the public and solemn declaration of England.

P. S. This morning the writer received two more letters from Mr. Livingston,²⁸ Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Congress, in one of which Mr. Madison reiterates the question of whether American ships flying their own flag will be admitted to the port of Leghorn just as they are admitted to various other neutral ports of the north. In the other letter he refers to the large amount of pesos duros that are introduced into the States from Havana, because of the large number of products, and especially flour, which the Spaniards need. He is also anxious that I make known in the south how the English have conducted themselves in the past.

Ardently desirous of doing what may be useful to Your Royal Highness' states, and gratifying to your noble brother (knowing as he does the commercial views he has much at heart), the writer fervently hopes that you will not be among the last to accept the offers of the United States, a country which will soon become an important sea power. And if circumstances should place obstacles in the way of the fulfillment of the writer's just and well-meaning wishes, he hopes that he may at least see his zeal approved by such a worthy and judicious Prince, as soon as his prognostications are borne out by the events.

[No. 6]

Florence, June 19, 1782.

Continuing to avail himself of the permission generously granted him, Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, Filippo Mazzei, has, in view of the present state of affairs between belligerent nations, thought of taking a step which obliges him to trouble Your Royal Highness again.

In reading the present report Your Royal Highness may perhaps feel that the writer has entered into too great detail in writing to a sovereign; but he hopes he will be forgiven after Your Royal Highness has noted his reasons.

In the second report he sent to Your Royal Highness in August of last year, the writer expressed himself as follows:

“The writer had just resolved to see Your Royal Highness again in order to give you some of the reasons why he considered it advisable to return immediately to America, with the hope of coming back soon in more peaceful times and with more definite instructions. He had even dared to hope he might ask your opinion on the question. But the arrival of recent letters containing the duplicates of the

²⁸ Livingston, Robert R. (1746-1813). Secretary of Foreign Affairs 1781-83. American minister in Paris 1801-04.

original commissions, which, for reasons still unknown, have been so long delayed in transit, renders all this no longer possible."

The reasons for taking such a step, which did not exist before on account of the receipt of the aforementioned duplicates, have now become very plausible, and he would gladly take this step, even at the cost of great personal inconvenience, for he is almost certain that the result would be entirely satisfactory to Your Royal Highness. The writer could easily return with instructions which will be in harmony with Your Royal Highness' intentions. By his departure the writer would avoid the possibility of receiving other instructions that might oblige him to make some definite request before Your Royal Highness should deem it proper to commit yourself.

The dispatches he has recently received refer to matters contained in earlier communications, which he has given up hope to receive, since ten or eleven months have already elapsed since they were written. From the contents of those he has received, he believes that some of his dispatches have not as yet reached their destination, even though he has invariably sent four copies of each one.²⁹

The difficulties that have arisen in the correspondence, a circumstance which explains his doubts concerning various matters connected with his duties, would more than justify his step, the more so because there is reason to believe that all these difficulties are not accidental. In one of his letters, the Governor of Virginia writes of instructions enclosed therewith, which were not in the envelope at all. In another letter he refers to three previous letters, which the writer never received, each of which contained duplicates of his credentials. Some sheets were also found missing from another letter which was delivered without any message by some unknown person at the home of Signor Favi in Paris, who writes as follows:

"I have also received a large folder for you from America. I do not know who sent it to me, because I was not at home when it was delivered. The first sheet which covered the folder was all torn. On seeing that it contained several enclosures, I removed it entirely so as to mail the other to you, etc."

²⁹ The Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library preserves memoranda in Mazzei's handwriting showing how he forwarded his dispatches to Jefferson. These notes indicate who carried his letters, how and when. Since each letter was numbered and four copies were sent by different routes, Mazzei could determine from known ship arrivals in America just which of his letters had certainly been received. (Marraro, *op. cit.*, 11).

To these and other difficulties of a similar nature must be added the omission of the grant which the State of Virginia allows the writer. This is attributable to a certain Mr. Penet,³⁰ a sly deceiver and a swindler, who, without any money of his own, found the means of establishing trade relations by supplying arms and other materials to that State, and consequently of posing as a very wealthy man. This enabled him to secure all the tobacco shipped to France by the Government of Virginia on behalf of that State.

To the best of the writer's knowledge, there are two remittances which have not as yet been paid—one for three hundred, and the other for five, or seven hundred louis. The writer does not know the exact amount of the second remittance, because he has received no direct information; he learned of it casually from Mr. Mason, a Virginian who is at present in Paris, and who informs the writer that he remembers only that the amount was for five or seven hundred louis. But it matters little to know the exact amount, since Mr. Penet previously had defaulted a payment for three hundred louis as well as for various other drafts drawn by Virginia's agent in New Orleans on behalf of his State.³¹

Penet's tricks and swindles, of which the writer has had positive information, assure the writer that despite the promises Penet makes in his protest there is nothing for him to hope from that source.

³⁰ Merchant of Nantes and one of the adventurers who under pretences of great friendship for the American cause offered their services to Congress, and used their official position for their own private advantage. Penet had left Philadelphia for France in 1775, carrying with him from the Committee a large contract for supplying arms, ammunition, and clothing for the American army. Though zealous to serve the colonies, Penet was not a man of great capital or influential connections. In a letter to Robert Morris, written from Passy, on December 14, 1782, Dr. Franklin said, after speaking of Virginia: "Penet is broke and absconded. His creditors are all worrying me with their complaints, who have nothing to do with his affairs. I have long since mentioned the inconvenience of the attempts of separate states to borrow money in Europe. They have hurt our credit and produced nothing. We have put faith in every adventurer, who pretended to have influence here, and who, when he arrived, had none but what our appointment gave him." (Marraro, *op. cit.*, 15).

³¹ P. Penet in a letter dated Nantes, May 20, 1780, and addressed to the Governor and Council of Virginia, said in part: "I paid to Mr. Mazzei in Paris, three hundred Louis d'or agreeable to the Order, I received from the Council of State whilst I was in Williamsburg.—I spoke many times with him and got him introduced to some Gentlemen, that may be serviceable to him at Court. I wish with all my heart, his Projects may meet with a favourable Issue; but I must own freely in the conversation I had with several great men on that Topick, I was ascertained such Projects were not practicable. However, Mr. Mazzei is a man of parts—if his Projects miscarry it shall not be for want of good zeal in the service of the State: Consequently his conduct cannot be blamable." *Calendar of Virginia State*

In due time the writer notified the Government of Virginia of this occurrence, but quite aside from the difficulties and delays that may arise, in Virginia it will be difficult to believe that the writer cannot find the money to make up for the remittances he has not received, since by virtue of his credentials, (which he asked permission in a previous report to show Your Royal Highness) he has the authority to contract a loan of 900,000 pounds sterling, and to pledge the faith, and, therefore, the entire assets of the State for this amount.

However, since he has in his possession Virginia treasury certificates (authenticated by the Governor and recognized by Dr. Franklin) for no inconsiderable sum of his own money, which he left invested in State funds at 6 per cent interest, he has thought it his duty to inform the authorities in Virginia that he would not in any way pledge the public credit for his own private needs unless he is forced to extremes. This he did also in order to have occasion once again to confirm his opinion of Your Royal Highness' disposition in favor of Virginia, as shown by the following paragraph literally translated from his letter of March 8, to his Government.³²

"I could ask this Sovereign for his help. In view of his favorable disposition towards us, I am convinced that he would not refuse it; but I shall not take such a step unless I find myself in extreme need, fearing that the difficulties which have prevented my receiving my subsidy may give rise to doubts as to the possibility of our being able to pay the interest on the loan in time of war, in accordance with the contract my instructions authorize me to draw."

The writer begs leave to copy the beginning of the reply sent to Penet d'Acosta, Frères et Cie., refusing the payment of the draft. He wishes to do this for several reasons, but chiefly because he desires to find a basis to discuss (since he has the permission to do so) a commercial law in force in both England and America, which will always be a great credit to a commercial country. Had this law existed in

Papers. Richmond, Va., 1875, I, 354. "To the Honourable Board of Trade of Virginia

Nantes, May 24, 1780.

Gentlemen:

. . . . By the order of Mr. Penet we have caused to be paid in Paris to Mr. Mazzei the sum of seven thousand, two hundred livres which will be charged to your account with the other small sums . . . [Va. State Archives.]

³² For the full text of the letter of March 8, see Garlick, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-76.

France, it would have prevented the loss that, in my opinion, the State of Virginia is about to suffer through Penet. Before reading the reply let me state that the Governor of Virginia, in authorizing the writer to draw on Penet & Co., informed him of the large shipments of tobacco made to that firm, declaring, *We have strengthened their hands*, which, in the idiom of the English language, means they have placed considerable capital in their hands. The following is the answer I received from the notaries in Nantes :

“The said gentleman, Penet D’Acosta, Frères & Cie., have replied to us that they cannot pay Mr. Filippo Mazzei’s draft, although it is authorized by the Governor and the State Council of Virginia, because at present they have no funds belonging to said State. And the aforementioned Mr. Penet, personally recognizing and respecting the powers conferred upon Mr. Filippo Mazzei, intends to honor his draft when his own plans are accepted, which he has reasons to hope will soon be crowned with success.”

The writer has been compelled to trouble Your Royal Highness with the recital of these difficulties, not only to show the reasonableness of the step which he plans to take, but to show also that it will not be easy for him to take it, if Your Royal Highness does not deign to have advanced to him, through some person in your confidence, a sum of money at five per cent. In return, he will pledge the faith of the State of Virginia, in accordance with the authority conferred upon him, or will mortgage the certificates of the money he has deposited in the treasury of that State. In whichever way this is done, the writer pledges himself to have the State of Virginia recognize its obligation to Your Royal Highness. He will also show the State of Virginia that he could probably have been granted every request had his new credentials reached him in due time.

Should Your Royal Highness consider it unwise for the writer to undertake this voyage, he would still be forced to beg Your Royal Highness to direct the payment to him of a sum of money—to be secured under the abovementioned conditions—sufficient to cover his expenses until the arrival of his remittances from Virginia, (which should not take more than six months) or, at least, an amount sufficient to take him to Holland, where it would be easy for him to obtain what he is seeking.

If Your Royal Highness should approve of his return to America, the writer asks that before his departure he be granted the favor of an audience to talk on certain matters of great interest to you, which would take too long to set forth in writing, and which deal with problems tending to promote the welfare of Your Royal Highness' states.

The writer has deemed it wise to go over the matter in detail in this letter in order to remove any doubts as to the authenticity of his statements, assuring you that he has documents to prove even more than what he has written.

Knowing that the readiness of Your Royal Highness to grant favors has often been abused, the writer does not wish to rest his case entirely upon unsupported statements, even though he was urged to do so by that inward impulse which is natural in an honorable man.

The writer's excuse for having importuned a Sovereign with these matters is to be found in the respect he has for his own dignity and even more so in the prestige of the State of Virginia.

In a country where Anglomania reaches the point of fanaticism, and where there is a tendency to misinterpret everything, as soon as the writer's position becomes known, not only would he himself surely be placed in a ridiculous light but probably also the State of Virginia.

Therefore, just as he does not wish to keep anything away from Your Royal Highness, so he has resolved to do the exact opposite with his compatriots. Wherefore, if Your Royal Highness should not be disposed to accede to any of his requests, the writer would sell some of his personal effects, using the proceeds to transfer himself to Holland. He prefers to do this rather than run the risk of making a pathetic showing in this country.

If the writer's business had been entirely private, he would not have had the imprudence to let himself sink so low, but entrusted as he is with public matters, he has not deemed it wise to take such a step unless forced to do so by necessity. He became convinced of this necessity only after the arrival of the last courier from France, containing news received from Nantes.

In conclusion, Your Royal Highness will permit the writer humbly to explain that if he cannot be assisted by someone on whom Your Royal Highness would deign to impose silence, he would find himself forced to decline your gracious help and to suffer the hardships he has mentioned above.

The writer will present himself at your next public audience to receive whatever commands Your Royal Highness

may deem fit to give him. Meanwhile, he begs permission to declare himself with every sincere sentiment, and with the deepest respect etc.³³

[Unnumbered]

Florence, June 25, 1782.³⁴

Having paid the tax for the support of the poor for many years in England, and having had the opportunity in Virginia to examine this law and put it into practice as one of the administrators elected by the residents of my parish, I have, since my return to Italy, given much thought to the serious evils which the freedom of begging can produce. I have discussed the matter with several persons. The reluctance of my fellow-countrymen to admit to themselves that there is a remedy for such an evil, has encouraged me to write out a plan wherein I show some of the evils, partly attributable to laws and customs, or to institutions which owe their origin to good and charitable intentions. My distrust of my own private opinion on various matters, especially concerning the

³³ During the course of an interview, the following day, which lasted more than an hour and three-quarters, the Duke made no mention of the receipt of this letter. *Memoirs of Mazzei*, 258.

³⁴ In his *Memoirs* [p. 258-259] Mazzei explains that several days after his arrival in Florence, he spoke of the nuisance of beggars to his friend Paoletti, for he had noticed that everywhere he was surrounded by mendicants. Paoletti told him that the Grand Duke had appointed four deputies to abolish this nuisance. These were Domenico Brichieri Colombi (fiscal auditor), Jacopo Biondi, Domenico Leoni, and Livio Francesco Gozzi. Since Mazzei had been one of the administrators in his district in Virginia, he proposed to write an article on begging to present to the Grand Duke. His friend thought that this would be superfluous since the Duke had sent to England, Holland, and the Hanseatic cities for regulations concerning beggars. Nevertheless, knowing that those regulations did not contain any practical measures, Mazzei wrote the article. The Duke accepted it with pleasure, at least so he told Mazzei; and the next evening the fiscal auditor, to whose house Mazzei used to go from time to time on friendly visits, took Mazzei into his study and showed him his manuscript. He told Mazzei that the sovereign had given it to him to read, with instructions to invite its author to attend the meetings of the deputation, and that he had ordered that nothing was to be decided without Mazzei's approval. At the same time, the fiscal auditor gave Mazzei the plan of the deputation to examine, thinking that Mazzei would approve of it entirely. Instead Mazzei thought that it would have been difficult to draw up anything worse. Mazzei attended two of the meetings. The deputation requested a statement of approval from Mazzei, which he did in writing but reluctantly. When the Duke received Mazzei's objections, Paoletti who was present, told Mazzei that after the Duke had read it, he threw himself on a sofa, unable to stand from laughing, and exclaimed: "Those asses probably did not understand it; they probably have taken it as a compliment." If it is remembered that the committee was of his own choosing, the reader may draw his own conclusions as to the Duke's character.

ability to express myself in my native tongue, after having spent nearly all my life, with the exception of my early youth, in foreign and distant lands, has induced me to seek the advice of some intelligent person. This has given me the opportunity of learning that, for several years, Your Royal Highness has shown a feeling of paternal solicitude. This has aroused in me the desire humbly to submit my ideas to Your Royal Highness. However, before taking this liberty, I deem it proper to ask your permission, both because I am not sure that the liberty you so generously granted me of writing to you applied to things of this nature and also because my style may not be suitable for a Sovereign. It contains also some arguments which, no matter how useful they might be in enlightening and convincing the public, would be superfluous and rash if addressed to Your Royal Highness, whose vast and universal knowledge is widely recognized, and whose ready and keen insight I have had occasion to admire whenever your Royal Highness' supreme graciousness has permitted me to remain in your presence. Perhaps you may find useful the practical method of feeding the real needy persons since it is based on long experience. With this hope in mind I shall present myself at the audience so as to have the honor of offering it to Your Royal Highness, whenever it may please you to receive it.³⁵ Meanwhile, longing for the opportunity to show myself not at all unworthy of the generosity of such a Prince, I beg to be permitted to remain, Your Royal Highness'

Most humble and devoted servant,

Filippo Mazzei

³⁵ This study, consisting of nine chapters, was later printed under the title: *Riflessioni su i Mali Provenienti dalla Questua e su i Mezzi di Evitaragli*. Pisa, Luigi Migliaresi Press, 1799, 48pp. A copy of the pamphlet is available in the Library of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Florence. (Miscellanea Scientifica, 307).

MAZZEI'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GRAND
DUKE OF TUSCANY DURING HIS AMERICAN
MISSION

By HOWARD R. MARRARO, Ph.D., *Columbia University,*
New York City

SECOND INSTALLMENT

[No. 7]

Florence, July 10, 1782.

Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, Filippo Mazzei, having been invited by the fiscal auditor, by order of Your Royal Highness, to discuss with him the plan for the abolition of street begging, and having been instructed by Your Royal Highness on the first of this month to note his observations on the plan proposed by the deputation, takes the liberty first of rendering most humble thanks to Your Royal Highness for having deigned to show him that you do not disdain to take into consideration the scant and limited knowledge which by dint of reflection and experience he has managed to acquire, and secondly of informing you that thanks to a sum of money he has recently received, he has resolved not to risk his health by setting out on this journey before the warm season is over. He hopes and desires from the bottom of his heart that Your Royal Highness will deign to employ him usefully during this period, so that he may have the honor and the comfort of contributing, so far as his good will and modest ability permit, to set up an institution which is of so much interest to Your Royal Highness' fatherly solicitude.

After having read the deputation's plan, the writer, feeling unable in all propriety to refrain from expressing his views in writing to the fiscal auditor, as he had been ordered to do, sought to do this in such a way as not to cause resentment. Yet he desired to be truthful.

He would hesitate writing to others with the same frankness with which he writes to Your Royal Highness, for where else could he find as much intellectual clarity and profound insight coupled with so great a love of truth? Your Royal Highness despises trivialities, grasps the really substantial things, and gives proper evaluation to the writer's intentions.

In this, as in any other suggestion he may be permitted to make, the writer's only aim is to earn for himself the benevolence of so great a prince in the event that he should succeed in rendering service to his fellowmen. He craves no other recompense.

If this statement were known, it would be ridiculed, or, at least, judged inopportune to make to a sovereign; but a philosopher ruler values truth, especially when it leads to an understanding of

unusual people. The writer hopes that Your Royal Highness will deign to forgive him for taking the liberty of drawing a sketch of his own character. Among the many letters of his which Your Royal Highness has deigned and still deigns to read, doubtless you will not mind glancing over this one. In it the writer desires to prove that his character is not despicable, and that his intentions deserve your indulgence. The writer experienced this desire while in England, as soon as Your Royal Highness started on your way to the throne of Tuscany, but the opportunity never presented itself of his writing to you. His forthcoming departure, and the uncertainty of his return, oblige him to do so now, and Your Royal Highness (forgive my bold words) cannot refuse to permit him to unburden his mind without wronging that deep and deferent affection which the writer has always had for you.

Even in those days the writer knew the many bad and obsolete laws and the serious abuses which existed in Tuscany. He realized then that the remedy could come only from a good, just, wise, and intelligent prince. Such a hope was born in him then, thanks to the knowledge he had of Your Royal Highness through the reports of many prominent subjects, and he was fired with the ambition of being able to contribute to its realization. He came to Tuscany, and ran into serious trouble because Marshal Botta³⁶ believed Rome too readily. The writer would have been sacrificed had not it been for the friendly and almost paternal solicitude of the present fiscal auditor, who exacted from him a promise not to put his foot on papal territory, which the writer was about to do, in obedience to the Marshal's request to go to Rome to explain his conduct.

Having pacified Rome through the intervention of many prominent citizens who, from all sides, rallied to the defense of the writer, he returned from Naples and had the honor to present his first report to Your Royal Highness, which, as he learned from Mr. Sobuin, Your Royal Highness was good enough to take into consideration.

Later, when the affairs of Your Royal Highness at the Court of London were entrusted to the writer, under the ministry of Count Rosemberg,³⁷ the same intrigue which had brought him into conflict with Rome, prejudiced Count Seilern³⁸ against him, so that for some time, he lost all hope of being able to prove his zeal in the service of Your Royal Highness.

³⁶ Botta Adorno, Antonio Ottone (Antonotto). Austrian Field Marshal. Mazzei here refers to the troubles he had with the Inquisition when he was accused of having imported into Italy books which were proscribed by the Church. See Galletti, *Ricordi dell'Inquisizione Toscana nel secolo XVIII*. *Rivista Fiorentina*, Florence, Feb. 1909, I, 17-25.

³⁷ See Mazzei's *Memoirs*, 152ff, 157, 157n.

³⁸ *Idem*, 158, 163.

Having returned to London and shown Count Seilern that he had been deceived by one of his unworthy chaplains, who had been bribed by certain cowardly ruffians, he obtained Seilern's promise to communicate with Count Rosenberg concerning the matter, and thus withdraw the charges. That was his own expression. After this, Seilern told Lord Cathcart,³⁹ who was about to leave as Ambassador Extraordinary to Russia, and the Count de Brühl, who was and still is the Envoy of Saxony, that he had done so. The writer never learned whether this was actually done. The matter ended there.

Feeling himself guided by an overpowering love of truth, and knowing how difficult it has always been for truth to come close to a throne; being also aware of the great advantage that a wise prince could derive from it if he were to see it in its sheer nakedness; and believing that the best means of commanding respect would be to remove all suspicions of self-interest, he sought to secure by hard work and thrift the means to live comfortably in his mother country on his own income. Then he planned to present himself to his prince, show him that ever since his boyhood his sincerity had become proverbial, tell him frankly that a man ready to sacrifice everything to truth, such as the writer has been, is now, and will always be, is not easy to find, and beg his permission to serve him and the commonwealth without expecting any pecuniary or honorary remuneration, since he considers that as the only means of avoiding (if this is at all possible) suspicion, envy, and intrigue.

He had almost succeeded in this intention when the deceits and frauds of his compatriots in their commercial dealings with him defeated his purpose. As a result he resolved to go to America, whither he took with him his love for his sovereign and his desire to serve his native country, as he had occasion to write to Your Royal Highness from Virginia, and later to prove by his deeds. This he was able to do until the war interrupted communications between the two countries.

As Your Royal Highness already knows, his conduct in that country, especially in public matters, earned him the confidence of the state, and he accepted with pleasure the commissions entrusted to him for reasons stated in his communications to you, and he is certain (despite what Your Royal Highness told him in the last audience) that he will soon be able, even from distant lands, to contribute to the advantage of this country's commerce. With this aim in view, in communicating to his government what you had said to him when, as he was about to leave, he asked for the honor of your commands, he did it in such a way as not to detract at all from the opinion that Americans have concerning Your Royal

³⁹ Cathcart, William Shaw. English general and diplomat.

Highness' disposition to favor them and to open, as soon as circumstances permit, a friendly correspondence for the mutual advantage of both countries.⁴⁰

Under the present state of affairs the writer takes the liberty of informing Your Royal Highness that he departs with the same sentiments that he has always had; that whether he be here or in distant lands, it will always be a source of great gratification to him to know that he enjoys the liberty of suggesting (as long as Your Royal Highness will deign to permit him this grace) whatever may contribute to lighten the heavy burden of Your Royal Highness, who seems to him to be the only person concerned with the welfare of his subjects; that if ever he should return for public matters in times of peace, he would ask the grace of being able to conduct himself in the same manner; and that if he should ever return as a private citizen, his income would be large enough to enable him to live comfortably; and he would not enjoy the happiness he so much desires if, as he has stated, Your Royal Highness were to deprive him of the means of rendering himself useful. The only condition he imposes is that he should never receive any other reward than that of being favorably thought of, and looked upon as a man of generous heart, honorable, an enemy of sloth, and a constant seeker of truth.

This is the true picture of Your Royal Highness' most humble servant—a picture that no one else could have painted. By narrating many anecdotes of his life, he could almost furnish mathematical proof of this character, but his modesty will not permit him to divulge them.

The writer does not expect Your Royal Highness to believe that he is without ambition, for that would be an untruth. He has his share of it just like any other person, if not more; the difference lies in the quality of this ambition. He aspires to distinguish himself from the average person by striving to render himself useful without seeking any advantage for himself. Since he has enough money to live comfortably, what more consoling reward than the approbation of the good, and the benevolence of a sovereign philosopher? The ability to show that our actions are prompted by unselfishness, a quality which pleases the heart and satisfies ambition to a supreme degree, is one that everyone praises but very few persons possess. But wealth and titles do not console; rather they serve no other purpose than to cater to pomp, arouse envy, and increase desires.

⁴⁰ The Duke had repeatedly told Mazzei that he felt sure that England would never consent to the independence of the Colonies, in spite of the fact that he showed him clearly that it would be forced to do so in order not to lose the great advantage of commerce with that country. Mazzei was of the opinion that the Duke's foolish behaviour resulted from faint-heartedness and weakness of mind. (Mazzei, *Memoirs*, 259.)

The writer hopes that the contents of this letter will not seem to Your Royal Highness at all contradictory to the request he made in the preceding memorandum, which concerned only a loan, and which he is forced to contract on account of the circumstances in which he found himself as an official of the State of Virginia. The conviction that he has done his duty leaves him as pleased as if his request had been granted. He flatters himself in the belief that the rejection was due to political views, and not at all to any doubt concerning the truth of his statements.

To dispel from Your Royal Highness' mind any doubt of inconsistency in his conduct, he takes the liberty to inform Your Royal Highness that, although he was not granted, as he desired, the delegation and the order which would have obliged the judges to abide by the spirit of the law, his request (for the granting of which the writer is extremely grateful to Your Royal Highness) was not intended to encourage the judges to hold in less respect the decisions of the Florentine Curia; and even if they had done so (since the case is not one to be delegated), the opposing side could have asked the Rota⁴¹ to review the case a second and even a third time. In such a case the writer would have been sacrificed entirely.

With this he intends only to justify his conduct after the receipt of the rescript. He supposes that Your Royal Highness must have had good reasons to refuse him what, he thought, only the deep-rooted abuse of the Curia opposed. He would not have troubled you further with regard to it, except to justify himself.

After humbly begging the pardon of Your Royal Highness for having troubled you with a statement which the writer for the last eight years has longed for an opportunity to pen, without ever having the courage which his forthcoming departure has now inspired, he will return, with the permission of Your Royal Highness, to the subject of almsgiving.

In accordance with the principles set forth in the plan which he had the honor to present to Your Royal Highness, the writer is convinced that the project is feasible. It could readily and easily be examined if Your Royal Highness would deign to appoint several intelligent persons to meet often to study and consider the subject thoroughly.

In matters of this nature it is not necessary to inconvenience persons who are at present in the service of Your Royal Highness. Every good citizen will believe his occupation more than amply rewarded by the honor of seeing himself chosen by his sovereign to introduce a system which is of so much interest to public welfare. Its examination requires a clear mind, a good

⁴¹ *Sacra Romana Rota* (Sacred Roman Rota) of the Roman Curia, with jurisdiction, ordinarily appellate, in civil and ecclesiastical cases. Just what Mazzei's relations with the Curia were at this time is not clear.

heart, a knowledge of the world, and a sound philosophy. And though one should not deceive himself into believing that such men abound, a sufficient number of them can always be found.

The writer is of the opinion that the ministers connected with crime control should not have anything to do with a regulation that must be pervaded with a spirit of pity and compassion; that that branch of the government should always avoid, whenever it can, embarrassment and hate, because often the public bases its judgment on the appearance of things rather than on their substance. The substance is rarely understood.

It is the opinion of the writer not only that the plan can be carried out, but that it may be examined by persons against whom there does not exist the least shadow of prejudice. This cannot be the case with men whose duties sometimes compel them to mete out punishment, even though the punishment is accompanied by a good measure of clemency. The writer also believes that those in charge of the execution of the plan be elected by the people, so that the general public, naturally inclined to complain of everything, would not have occasion to do so in this particular case. This is a very essential point. The writer believes that the plan should be put into execution throughout all the State simultaneously, and that it would be very imperfect if it took only the beggars into consideration.

Even if the plan could be carried out in Tuscany without the imposition of a tax, provision should be made by law as to where the funds are to come from in case of need. This would serve also as a check on those administrators, who, through excessive compassion, incline to pernicious liberality.

It would be a great consolation for the writer to be able to talk again with Your Royal Highness on the subject; but he will wait till he is called, lest his zeal should render him importune. Withholding for the present what he may wish to add to the subject, he closes this communication humbly begging Your Royal Highness to receive graciously the sentiments which he holds for you, and to remember that after these two months, he may perhaps never again have the good fortune of prostrating himself at your feet.

[No. 8]

Florence, July 23, 1782.⁴²

On the assumption that you may not have already received the news, Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, Filippo

⁴² In this letter Mazzei is anxious to show the Grand Duke not only that he was informed of what was happening in the Cabinet of St. James', but that he was easily able to conjecture the probable future developments. It is likely that Sir Horace Mann knew none of these, since he received only the ministerial newspapers, whereas Mazzei received an opposition paper also.

Mazzei, has deemed it his duty to inform you of an event which clearly illustrates the crisis in present affairs.

The cabinet of the King of England has decided to grant the Americans their full independence without reservations, if General Carleton should prove unsuccessful in persuading them to agree to some face-saving concessions, which, however, the cabinet has no reason to hope for.

It is very strange that this event should have occurred almost at the same time that Count Ostermann,⁴³ by order of his queen, reproached the Dutch ambassador for having been too hastily in recognizing the independence of the American Colonies.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, this is a fact. Not more than fifteen, perhaps only eight days shall elapse before the writer can send you indisputable proof of it.

It would be no surprise if this event were still unknown to Mr. Mann,⁴⁵ for though the present ministers respect his goodness of heart and other positive qualities, yet they do not hold the same opinion of his political principles, the more so as they know his fondness and consideration for his nephew, who belongs to the party of the former ministry.

The aforementioned decision of the English cabinet is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. The late Marquis Rockingham,⁴⁶ first Lord of the Treasury, recently deceased, and Lord John Cavendish,⁴⁷ who is second in rank in that office, found that, by making peace even before the forthcoming opening of Parliament, the debt, for which money must still be found to pay the interest, would amount to 39,500,000 pounds sterling. The General Commander of the East Indies has reported that four months back pay must be paid to the army, adding that nothing but a

Two papers were printed in Florence; one called the *Gazzetta Universale*, and the other *Notizie del Mondo*. The editor of the former received his news on England from Sir Horace Mann's bulletin. Foreseeing what would appear in the *Gazzetta*, Mazzei wrote a refutation for the other paper, submitting it as the translation of a letter, written to a friend in London by an English gentleman, who justified his resignation from office by saying that he could no longer endure to see untruth carried in triumph with such effrontery.

⁴³ Ostermann, Jean Count d'. (1724-1811). Russian ambassador to Stockholm (1772).

⁴⁴ Holland recognized the United States as an independent government on April 19, 1782.

⁴⁵ Mann, Horace Sir. (1701-86). From 1740 Minister plenipotentiary in Florence.

⁴⁶ Rockingham, Charles Watson-Wentworth. Second Marquis of. (1730-83). In 1782 Rockingham succeeded Lord North as Prime Minister. His ministry was able to curb the power of the crown and to concede the legislative independence of Ireland, before it was dissolved by Rockingham's death.

⁴⁷ Cavendish, John. Lord. Whig statesman. An opponent of Lord North, whom he succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1782.

prompt payment will keep the army united, since it is largely composed of natives. Nor is any help to be hoped for from Bengal, for last year the expenditures of that kingdom exceeded the revenues by one million.

It is very probable that general peace may be declared before the writer can leave Holland and France to return to America, and that his instructions may oblige him to remain some time longer in Europe. For this reason, if Your Royal Highness wishes him to continue to remind Americans of your disposition in their favor, the writer desires the honor, before leaving, to outline a number of matters to Your Royal Highness, and to learn from you how he should behave concerning the tasks already entrusted to him by the State of Virginia, and others which he thinks may be entrusted to him. He is also anxious to know your opinion concerning questions which may be put to him by Congress through Mr. Adams, as happened last year.

The writer would be wronging what little intellect God gave him, and his own sincerity much more, were he not to state that he understood, at his last audience, that Your Royal Highness would not take any step before the conclusion of peace. But if peace is concluded, as it probably will, it would be well to place the writer, before being asked to submit definite proposals, in a position to set forth at least Your Royal Highness' views on various matters, and that with some accuracy. If this is not done he would be obliged to set forth difficulties that afterwards might not arise. It would be imprudent to arouse hopes for favors which might not then be agreeable to Your Royal Highness' views.

Therefore, in the belief that it is necessary to receive your instructions concerning what could and might be agreed upon once peace is concluded, the writer begs the honor of being able to discuss the matter thoroughly with Your Royal Highness so as to know what your pleasure and wishes are in the matter. He awaits the orders of Your Royal Highness for this honor, fearing increasingly, as he does, of importuning you.

The writer takes the liberty of asking you to send your commands to him through Signor Andrea Frati, or Signor Giovanni Fabbroni,⁴⁸ or the director of the post office, or through some other person whose position would arouse no unpleasant suspicions, for when the fiscal auditor sent for him on the subject of begging, he made use of persons who, because of the prejudices that prevail in this country, would supposedly not be sent except to those who must give an account of their actions.

The writer takes the liberty of repeating that his aim is to deserve Your Royal Highness' pleasure and approbation in all

⁴⁸ Fabbroni, Giovanni Valentino Mattea (1752-1822). Famous naturalist, economist, philologist, and archeologist of Florence.

matters, and his frankness, which results from truth and respect, obliges him to suggest that, if ever any attempts are made, either directly or indirectly, to discredit him in the eyes of Your Royal Highness, it must be borne in mind that Anglophiles and members of the Curia, and the friends of your sister-in-law form no small number of his enemies.

May Your Royal Highness attribute this frankness to the fairness which the writer knows and feels he owes to himself, to the great scorn he prides himself on having for low and malicious people, and to his desire to be known by Your Royal Highness for what he really is. With the greatest respect and most sincere admiration, he has the honor to be, etc. etc.

[No. 9]

Florence, August 26, 1782.

Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, Filippo Mazzei, realizing that the hour of his departure is approaching, has deemed it his duty humbly to submit this last memorandum, before presenting himself personally before Your Royal Highness, to receive the honor of your commands.

In his last memorandum he mentioned that the cabinet of the King of England had agreed to recognize the independence of America without any reservations in the event that General Carleton were not successful in persuading Americans to make some face-saving concessions. In the postscript he mentioned the upheaval which occurred in the ministry, adding that if this produced any change in their resolution with regard to America, he would take the liberty to inform Your Royal Highness of it. He also stated that no more than fifteen and perhaps only eight days would elapse before he could produce unequivocal proofs in support of his statements. A protracted period of indisposition did not permit him to do so within the time indicated, and he, therefore, asks permission to do so now, in order that from his letters Your Royal Highness may, at any future time, see how events have borne out all he has written. The extraordinary power of your memory will enable you to recall what he has had the honor of communicating to you orally.

On the tenth of last month General Conway⁴⁹ and the Duke of Richmond⁵⁰ in their desire to show Parliament that Mr. Fox⁵¹ and other colleagues had had no just reasons for absenting themselves from the ministry, not only gave ample proof that the resolution had been adopted by the council, but also indicated that there was no intention to modify this or any other measure that had already been agreed upon. Furthermore, they added that if any changes were made, they too would resign. But the most positive proof that could be presented is the statement made in Parliament by Count Shelburne,⁵² since he is the present Prime Minister, and the open enemy of the absolute independence of Americans. He declared that, although he personally still thought that as soon as the absolute independence of America was recognized, the splendor of England's glory would forever become obscured, he had nevertheless yielded to the majority in the council.

In order to understand the opinion of the English nation on this subject, it is sufficient to know that all those ministers (both those who resigned and those who remained in office) who maintained, as they still do, that it is necessary to recognize the absolute independence of America, enjoy the esteem and trust of the nation, while Lord Shelburne has lost all his popularity. On the other hand, according to persons who should be better informed or more truthful, His Majesty in the conversations he has had with this minister, is said to have assured Shelburne that he would support him only so long as he continued to be with the King's party against the absolute independence of America. But these conversations are pure fabrications which are devoid of truth and common sense. Although the King's party has done everything possible to conceal the true motives that led to the appoint-

⁴⁹ Conway, Henry Seymour (1721-95). Field marshal. From 1741 to 1761 he was representative for Antrim in Irish Parliament. In 1759 promoted to rank of Lieutenant-General. In 1782 he was commander-in-chief with a seat in the cabinet. On July 9, 1782, he spoke against Fox, denying that there was a division in the cabinet or a departure from the policy of peace.

⁵⁰ Richmond, Charles Lennox, Duke of (1735-1806). In 1778, he proposed to recognize the independence of the revolted American Colonies. In 1782, he became the master of the ordinance.

⁵¹ Fox, Charles James (1749-1806). Whig member of Parliament and an advocate of parliamentary reform. He furthered the popular cause, not only by denouncing reactionary officials and policies, but also by espousing an advanced program of parliamentary reform.

⁵² Petty, William (Count of Shelburne). First Marquis of Landsdowne. (1737-1805). Shelburne, who had hitherto served as Secretary of State, was called by the King to the head of the Ministry, on the death of Lord Rockingham. Fox, for personal reasons, refused to serve under Shelburne. Others objected to Shelburne's popular tendencies. The Shelburne Ministry lasted only long enough to conclude the final peace with the United States on the base of their independence; for in the opening of 1783, it was overthrown by the most unscrupulous coalition known in English history. (Green, *History of the English People*, IV, 286).

ment of Lord Shelburne as Prime Minister, a circumstance that resulted in a split in the new ministry, it is known that the appointment was made in an effort to stop the execution of a plan which tended to diminish the influence of the Crown. The writer has positive information on this point, and submits as proof the fact that Lord Shelburne's last speech was no less equivocal than the responsories of oracles. Those who resigned from the Ministry accused him of inconsistency and duplicity. Mr. Fox in particular, while praising the sentiments of some of his friends who remained in office, condemned their lack of foresight and predicted that they would in time become wise and follow his example.

It is not certain whether the royal court will win its point. Judging by appearances, the chances are that it will win, since there is no longer any talk of changing the present Parliament, the majority of whose members favors the former ministry.

As for the independence of America, there is now no reason why the English should give another humiliating proof of their weakness by recognizing America before agreeing on a general peace. From General Carleton's dispatches Englishmen have seen that this would not help them to obtain a truce from America.

The ill-considered statements that England will never, at any cost, recognize America's independence, come from persons whose minds are distorted by passion, or who suffer from political shortsightedness, for it is quite clear that such a step, however hard it may be, is inevitable.

The writer begs Your Royal Highness to permit him to speak frankly of the situation in America in consideration of the fact that up to now all his predictions have been borne out, even though in his conversations and letters he may have merely suggested to Your Royal Highness the probability and not the certainty of these events. He is induced to do this solely through his desire to feel that he has done all he could decently do to persuade Your Royal Highness to look with less indifference upon those means which may tend to preserve the good will of the *only* country whose friendship may be of great benefit to the commerce and *all* the industries of your States. Despite the war, the power of America increases by great strides, and the writer has recently received authentic proofs of this fact from Virginia, Philadelphia, and from Mr. Adams, the Minister to Holland.

For still some time to come any major European sea power, that is willing uselessly to sacrifice more than it can ever gain, can harm Americans along their seaboard, but a combination of all Europe can no longer take from them their independence.

It must not be presumed that the belligerent powers of Europe will make peace only on the condition that England and America end their disputes, for England would immediately offer America

treaties of alliance and commerce which will in no way tend to limit the independence of Americans.

But even if such a peace should be concluded, and England should refuse to deal with America as an independent power, Americans would immediately stop all foreign trade for which they have no absolute need. Their frigates and privateers would do much harm to the English for whom commerce is a vital need. Since England has no privateers, she would be obliged to bear the expenses of a naval warfare to give what can at best be imperfect protection to its own commerce.

America produces everything. By merely shifting the workers who are now engaged in the production of the immense quantities of raw materials that are shipped abroad, she can easily manufacture any article. If it is true that Americans prefer agricultural pursuits to any other, it must be remembered that that is due to force of habit and to the fact that they look upon farming as a more pleasant occupation. Furthermore, there are large tracts of excellent land which are very profitable. This project has been under consideration for some time. The writer was told that he was the first to propose it. The fact is that the writer made the proposal as soon as he received from Dr. Franklin the reply mentioned in his first memorandum. In that reply Dr. Franklin stated that at that time Congress had not even thought of entering into trade relations with European powers. The writer's proposal was submitted to Congress by Mr. Jefferson, whom I have repeatedly mentioned; Dr. Franklin expressed himself as holding the same opinion as the writer. The suggestion would have been adopted the following year had France not hastened to accept the proposals received from Americans. France accepted only because she heard that England herself, following the total defeat of General Burgoyne⁵³ because of his having ventured too far inland, was about to propose conditions of settlement. This situation invariably arises whenever the enemy commits such errors.

A few months ago the improved morale of the English occasioned by the change in the ministry proved nothing but a pure and fleeting delusion. The result of the battle of April 12, merely caused a respite from the evils; it was not a favorable turn in the tide of events. Serious consideration is being given in England to the means of avoiding total disaster, and of retrieving as much as possible their lost trade with America. It is not true that they are deceiving themselves in believing that they can obtain from America any concession which would infringe upon her rank as a sovereign nation. They are fully convinced of this fact, despite

⁵³ Burgoyne, John (1722-92). After capturing Ticonderoga, Burgoyne moved toward the Hudson, encountering continual obstructions in his route. After a series of engagements in which he suffered a terrible loss, Burgoyne was at length forced to surrender at Saratoga on October 17, 1777.

their efforts to lead various courts into believing the contrary. Their object is to discourage these courts from acquiring for their respective states the commerce with America without which English industries can never again flourish as in the past. All Englishmen agree on this point.

Besides, they deceive themselves in thinking that they can retrieve a considerable part of America's trade; the wounds inflicted are too deep and too recent. If ever private persons in America should, by force of habit, permit themselves to resume trade relations, their legislative bodies would enact laws to stop them.

The means to carry this out are not wanting. Before the writer's departure from Virginia, this state was considering the advisability of placing high tariffs on English manufactures that might be imported after the restoration of peace. It was proposed to use the revenue to indemnify persons who suffered losses by a method of warfare unworthy of civilized nations. It is very probable that the other states will follow the example of Virginia, as they have done in other matters.

England cannot long delay to give up her ill-founded claims on America. It is certain that Americans will be tacitly or openly grateful to those who have aided them, or at least shown a disposition to do so. They will make a clear distinction between friendly people and those who have shown themselves opposed or indifferent to them.

In this last memorandum, the writer has deemed it his duty to call Your Royal Highness' attention to the matters herein recited in order that Your Royal Highness may in your wisdom be better able to judge whether it is more expedient to you to profess a complete indifference toward the friendship of the American states in general and of Virginia in particular, or to give evidence of your appreciation of it. Your Royal Highness could do so in various ways, without at all compromising yourself.

If the affectionate veneration in which the writer has always held your person and his great desire to merit your benevolence, as well as the means he has used to deserve it, are deemed worthy of a gracious reward, he begs that it be in the form of an audience, longer than usual, before his departure, for which purpose he will present himself at the public audience.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, with the

⁵⁴ Mazzei obtained the desired interview, not only a longer one than usual, as he had requested, but interminable and completely useless. Mazzei would not tell to what trivial fancies his conduct in such an important affair as this could be attributed, but he gave a few details from which the reader can draw his own conclusions. After Mazzei had spoken to the Grand Duke one day of the nature and character of his new compatriots, in order to show him that the cabinet of St. James' would not achieve its purpose, the Duke replied: "I do not believe that they will be able to do a great deal by themselves; but if they trust themselves to France . . . !" Although the

greatest deference and with profound veneration, he has the honor to remain Your Royal Highness' most humble servant, etc.

[No. 10]

Amsterdam, December 20, 1782.⁵⁵

About a month ago I was tempted to avail myself of the liberty granted me to inform you that the English and American ministers had signed in Paris the preliminaries of peace in which America's complete independence is unequivocally recognized. I also desired to set forth what seemed to me appropriate under the circumstances. But upon reflecting over the steady opposition successfully waged against my statements by a nation which seems to pride itself in its contempt for truth, I thought it best to wait for the publication of the King's speech to Parliament, because, if the negotiations had been interrupted before that time, no mention would have been made of them in the speech, and my probity, which I value as much as my life, would surely have suffered from it.

Your Royal Highness will permit me to submit to your wise, just and discreet consideration the conduct of the Court of St. James' in assuring the courts of Europe, definitely and without hesitation, that it would never consent to the independence of the United States, just as Your Royal Highness had the kindness to tell me during my last two audiences. Permit me further to inquire whether, in your lofty wisdom, these courts should passively brook such conduct or rather open without further delay commercial relations between their subjects and the people of the United States, and to inquire further whether this should not be done on the strength of the public and solemn declaration made by the King of England, even before the signing of peace—a peace which that monarch ardently desires.

This speech supports the statement contained in my fourth⁵⁶ memorandum of April 29, namely, that the act of Parliament which I translated in that memorandum authorized the King to agree to the absolute independence of the thirteen American states. The reasons set forth in my preceding memorandum, wherein I foresaw that England would seek to have other powers believe that she would never consent to this independence, have also been borne out.

Queen of France was his sister, the Duke could not conceal his envy and hatred of the Bourbons, and Mazzei had reason to suppose that he revealed it in conversations within the family. (Mazzei, *Memoirs*, 262).

⁵⁵ Mazzei left Florence for Holland in November 1782. This letter had no effect whatsoever on the Grand Duke. As for the separate article which Mazzei mentioned sending him, he did so with the eleventh and last letter which Mazzei wrote from Paris three months later.

⁵⁶ Should be the fifth.

Had the information I gave in the aforesaid two memoranda been available to many subjects who are more devoted to politics than to truth, they would not have hesitated to give as certain what I suggested as being very probable concerning the intentions of the Court of St. James'. Now I hope Your Royal Highness will do me the justice to believe me when I state that I would not have anyone, much less Your Royal Highness, accept as a fact what I wrote in my last two memoranda of July 23 and August 26, if there had been the slightest doubt in my mind. Perhaps my views differed from those of one of your very worthy subjects, whom I loved and respected. However, I had the honor to write to Your Royal Highness from America that he was not to be trusted, for, since he was deceived, he would of necessity, and through no faults of his own, deceive others.

In my code of morals, Your Royal Highness, there is nothing that can justify a lie. Fashion would condemn this statement as being high-sounding and almost poetic, but my heart dictates it, my conscience approves it, and the love of truth which dwells in your heart assures me that it cannot be displeasing to you.

Convinced as I am that Your Royal Highness will forgive me for this digression, I shall pass on to review as briefly as possible what I believe to be necessary under the present circumstances. But first let me say that this digression must be attributed to my character, which I am anxious to have you know while it can still be of service to you.

I shall not quote from the numerous letters I have received from private and trustworthy persons from various parts of America, which give the lie to everything the English Government has broadcast concerning the state of the American armies, the want of union among the various states, and the unwillingness of the people to pay the taxes levied on them. I shall confine myself to only one letter of August 15, which I received from the State Council of Virginia. In that letter I am assured that our army is in every respect in an excellent condition, that in no campaign have we had one so powerful as we shall have next spring, that the union among the states could not be firmer, and that the revenue from the new taxes is beginning to pour into the treasury.

It is true, however, that the tax bill has met difficulties which conditions rendered inevitable. It is not necessary to tell Your Royal Highness the reasons for which, under the present circumstances and because of the brief period of time that has elapsed since the abolition of paper money, it has been impossible to put in circulation enough specie to enable a goodly number of citizens to pay these taxes at the present time. Despite the good intentions of the Colonies to take measures beyond their resources, it is now clear that it will be necessary for them to borrow abroad at the

conclusion of peace. Though expenditures are high and the settlements to be made in the various departments amount to a considerable sum, yet prudence requires that taxes be light during a period when the citizens are trying to recover from past misfortunes.

Since this is well known in this country, one of its leading merchants has told me, without any inquiry on my part, that if, on the conclusion of peace, the State of Virginia should desire to secure a loan here of 5,000,000 florins, his house would undertake to raise it provided that the interest is paid in tobacco. Here all affairs are conducted in a business-like manner. This merchant's firm would profit from the commission on the loan and the annual commission from the sale of tobacco. It would not be difficult for the firm to find underwriters for the above-mentioned sum at a time when it is difficult to invest the money elsewhere at five per cent with any degree of safety. I did not refuse the offer, but asked a month's time to decide.

I have felt it my duty to inform Your Royal Highness of this new development, because it is still within my power to give you the opportunity to show your willingness to aid the states and particularly Virginia. I take the liberty to suggest that, should you prefer not to appear in the affair even after the conclusion of peace, means can be found to bring all this about. I repeat that I would take it upon myself to have the states acknowledge their obligation to Your Royal Highness even for the money that will be raised elsewhere. The resulting advantage will be felt throughout your states.

Since I have already notified the Government of Virginia in a letter from Florence that, on taking leave of Your Royal Highness, you had granted me the privilege of writing to you on anything I deemed proper, and that you had promised a reply whenever the nature of the subject required one, it would now be very appropriate to receive a reply couched in general terms, but in which you express your willingness to aid the states, particularly Virginia. It would also be beneficial to refer to what I was permitted to write two years ago, namely, *that everything that could prudently be done would indeed be done*. This would lead them to believe that your intentions have always been the same, and that your intentions now are not the result of changed circumstances. The result will be the same no matter who the writer of the letter will be as long as he states that he is writing by order of Your Royal Highness.

With reference to the matter of the young men of Virginia who, as I wrote in my first memorandum, might come to study at the University of Pisa, I must state that their parents have manifested some apprehension on account of the debauchery which

they have heard prevails in Italy, and the efforts of priests and friars to make converts. As to the first objection, I have replied that Pisa is sufficiently removed from the capital of the country and its seaport to be of fairly decent morality; as to the second objection, I have stated that I did not believe it, but that if it were true, I was sure that the sovereign would stop it. On my arrival in Tuscany I saw many evidences of the zeal with which Your Royal Highness sought to improve the morals of your subjects. I informed Americans of your zeal, and they were satisfied with my assurances. I would now like to know if I may state that Your Royal Highness will intervene to remove the second objection, if it became necessary.

Your Royal Highness will permit me to end this letter with two thoughts. One is that if Your Royal Highness ever entertained doubts as to my character, I would be deprived of the power to be useful, as indeed I desire to be. The other is that though an honorable man need only be at peace with his own conscience, there are times when he must try to remove (as much as possible) harmful suspicions even when he is not asked to do so; under such circumstances he should not be content merely with being known unto himself. I, therefore, ask your permission to express, on a separate sheet of paper, the strong reasons that lead me to believe that attempts have been made to discredit me in the eyes of Your Royal Highness. Meanwhile, with the same unswerving sentiments of respect, I have the honor to be, etc.

P. S. The report of impending news of interest, which never did arrive, made me delay the mailing of this letter for a week.

[No. 11]

Paris, March 16, 1783.⁵⁷

After I had submitted to Your Royal Highness my last report dated Amsterdam, December 20, a trip through Holland prevented my reaching here in time to communicate to you some interesting news concerning the peace treaties which must now be considered final, for the signing of the so-called definitive treaty will be purely a formality. The doubts that are being spread on

⁵⁷ When Mazzei reached Paris he talked with the three American commissioners: Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Henry Laurens. After he had talked with each of them and had been informed of European and American affairs, Mazzei wrote this letter, enclosing an article which served to vent his feelings in regard to the sovereign's foolish and puerile behavior toward him. Mazzei no longer hoped that it would produce any effect, but he did not want to have to reproach himself for not having made every effort. Mazzei thought that the article mentioned in the second paragraph of the letter was one of the best he ever wrote. Mazzei received no reply to the letter. He was not disappointed, for he knew the Duke's weaknesses. (Mazzei, *Memoirs*, 263.)

this score, in view of the dissensions in England, have no foundation whatsoever. The parliamentary strife between the four parties is due solely to a scramble for government offices. As a matter of fact it is the English who fear changes in the preliminaries of peace, especially since the receipt of information concerning certain resolutions passed by the Virginia Assembly, wherein Virginians declare themselves opposed to the term *peace preliminaries*, and insist that they be called *treaties* instead.

When I reached Paris early in February, I wrote a report containing considerable information tending not only to satisfy your curiosity on present events, but also to throw much light on probable future developments. To apologize for my verbosity (for I recited everything in great detail and began *ab ovo*), I took the liberty of saying: "It is not the news of the event itself which is useful, but rather that of the impelling causes, and the means employed to bring the event about."

Since I could not prudently mail the aforementioned report without first making sure that it would not be intercepted, I made many inquiries and heard from all sides that the censorship of the mail is very thorough, and more so for outgoing than for incoming letters. I had thought best not to say anything to Signor Favi, but finally, necessity forced me to ask him if he could suggest a safe way of my sending a letter to Your Royal Highness. He replied that the only one known to him was through the ambassador of the Emperor, who sends a courier to Vienna about once a month, just as he had done only a few days before. Since I must send the present report through the mails, I shall limit myself to a discussion of those things which cannot compromise anyone.

In the aforementioned report, I informed Your Royal Highness that as early as the spring of last year, the King of Sweden proposed to the Americans a commercial treaty which, for reasons that I cannot discuss here, was not concluded until the fifth of last month. I also informed you of the great desire of the English to negotiate a treaty as soon as possible, and of the reason why there is now no American minister in Europe authorized to sign it.

To follow things out in their order, I shall now state that Denmark has already appointed a minister to Congress. In England a parliamentary bill is being prepared to make up amply for the absence of a treaty with the United States. All parties and the entire nation are supporting it. If the bill proposed in the House of Commons is enacted without changes, American citizens in the dominions of Great Britain will enjoy all the advantages which Britain's own subjects enjoy, and in some cases even greater ones. In order that Your Royal Highness may judge for yourself, I enclose the passages that contain the substance of the bill.

Finally, Your Royal Highness will understand that if the aforementioned bill is passed as it stands, Americans will be able to bring sugar and coffee from the English islands to the Mediterranean at better rates than can the English themselves; and that, when travelling on ships of countries that are hostile to Great Britain, they will enjoy privileges that the English themselves enjoy only when travelling on ships of British construction. I am sure you will agree that such a procedure is tantamount to saying: "Dear brothers, since we have been unable to enchain you, we wish to embrace you, and offer you more than we are willing to grant to our own children."

If Your Royal Highness will recall my verbal and written statements to you concerning the commercial possibilities of the United States of America, the intentions of the English with regard to the necessity of retrieving this commerce, and the motives which prompted them to lie to the other nations, you will see everything borne out in the enclosed translation.

In the report which caution alone has prevented me from mailing, I explained to Your Royal Highness that I am still in a position to have Americans take due cognizance of your frequently expressed inclination in their favor, and to urge them to seek your friendship. The fact that some sovereigns have already taken the initial step, and that others are about to do so, should not only prove more satisfying to your dignity, but the consequences can be even more advantageous for your states.

I shall mention briefly a few of the things I stated in the report on this subject: From a letter from the Governor of Virginia, dated September 30, I learn that all the public papers, from the first year of the Revolution to the invasion of Arnold, Phillips and Cornwallis, have been lost; that they were entirely unaware of my position, and of the conduct of Penet, whom I mentioned in my memorandum of June 19; and that they are no longer planning to seek loans in Europe, because they believe it more convenient to do so at home, where money, although very unevenly distributed, is at present abundant.

A letter along the lines I suggested from Amsterdam, couched in very general terms, will produce the desired effect, provided it appears to be in reply to former proposals. This would lead Americans to believe that these proposals were not carried out on account of their failure to send me the required instructions. Such a letter could be sent through the usual channels, and even better through Signor Niccoli, the uncle of Signor Favi.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The sentence in footnote 20, page 286, of the first installment of this article, which reads: "Nephew of the abbot Niccoli in the Tuscan agency in Paris," belongs to footnote 19, on the same page.

In order to correct, so far as lies within my power, the unfavorable impression that false and malignant reports may have produced, I shall write on a separate sheet the information I promised in my letter from Amsterdam. This I shall do briefly and in a style characteristic of one who worships truth, who longs to be believed so as to be useful to others, and who neither needs nor desires anything for himself.

Your Royal Highness promised me a reply whenever the subject matter warranted it. If, in this very important crisis, and at a time when I can exert some influence on the decisions to be taken in America, I do not see myself so honored, I must conclude you have not believed my statements, and that were I to continue to write, I should merit the name of importuner and imbecile, and that it would be imprudent to forward, even by safe means, the aforementioned paper containing news which I alone know, and which I should not confide to anyone but to Your Royal Highness, begging you not to reveal the name of its author to anyone, except to your august brother.

Meanwhile, with profound respect and sincere veneration, I have the honor to remain,

Your humble, devoted, and obedient servant,
Filippo Mazzei.



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